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Inspection
Service

**Wildlife
Services**

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WILDLIFE SERVICES—SOUTH DAKOTA

Contact Information:

For Assistance:

Phil Mastrangelo, South Dakota and North Dakota Wildlife
Services State Director or Tim Pugh, South Dakota Wildlife
Services District Supervisor
420 S. Garfield Avenue, Suite 300
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: (605) 224-8692 FAX: (605) 945-2677
Toll Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS
E-mail: p.mastrangelo@aphis.usda.gov or
timothy.l.pugh@aphis.usda.gov

For Research:

Dr. George Linz, Field Station Leader
2110 Miriam Circle, Suite B
Bismarck, ND 58501-2502
Phone: (701) 250-4467 FAX: (701) 250-4408
E-mail: george.m.linz@aphis.usda.gov
Web site: www.aphis.usda.gov/ws

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in South Dakota

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on South Dakota Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

South Dakota is characterized by a diverse landscape of river valleys, rolling prairie, and badlands. Vast open spaces occupied by farms, ranches, and small towns contrast with larger urban and suburban areas. A diversity of wildlife occupies both rural and urban areas, often causing conflicts with their human counterparts.

Wildlife Services assists with the management of wildlife conflicts that impacts livestock producers, farmers, homeowners, airports and public land managers.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

In many instances, WS enables others to resolve their wildlife conflicts by providing *technical assistance* which may include sharing information or equipment. When resolving these conflicts is beyond the means of the individual, WS conducts *direct assistance* regarding wildlife at the damage site. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) also conducts *scientific research* across the nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure that WS utilizes state-of-the-art science and technology.

While WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, a few in-depth examples are provided to highlight WS role in protecting important resources including livestock, crops, human health and safety, and private and publicly-owned property.

Top 2 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting sunflower and other grain crops from damage by blackbirds
- Protecting human health and safety at airports

Top 2 WS Research Projects of Interest to South Dakota:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Reducing blackbird damage to sunflower and feedlots



Protecting Natural Resources—Once considered the most endangered mammal in North America, the black-footed ferret is being successfully reintroduced into areas of South Dakota. The South Dakota WS program initially provided assistance in protecting newly released ferrets from predators and continues to assist in the recovery efforts.

Protecting Crops—Blackbirds are responsible for more than \$5 million in losses annually to sunflower and grain crops in the upper Great Plains. The NWRC field station in Bismarck, ND continues to work on the development of control tools that can be used to mitigate these losses. Since most damage occurs near cattail wetlands that are being used by roosting blackbirds, WS identifies these areas and treats them with an aquatic herbicide. This makes these areas less attractive to the blackbirds while restoring valuable nesting sites for waterfowl.

Protecting Air Travelers—Every year, lives are endangered world wide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other wildlife damage aircraft. Experts estimate that bird strikes with airplanes cost the civil aviation industry more than \$300 million annually in the United States.

WS is recognized nationally and internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. The NWRC field station in Sandusky, OH continues to conduct research to better understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop

management tools to reduce these hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards, and provide airport personnel with information to control or prevent these hazards. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Bird Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to aviation.

To better understand and address actual and potential wildlife hazards, WS has conducted one-year wildlife hazard assessments and developed Wildlife Hazard management plans for the Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Pierre, and Watertown airports in South Dakota. In 2004, WS provided assistance to 20 airports in South Dakota in an effort to reduce wildlife related hazards to aircraft.

Information Transfer—Commercial pesticide applicators that work with predator, rodent, and bird problems in South Dakota are trained by WS in wildlife identification and the proper uses of pesticides and other control tools. In addition to regular communication with sunflower producers, information and assistance with blackbird damage is provided annually through several meetings, workshops, and field days.

Looking to the Future

Public health and safety is a growing concern for the South Dakota WS program, particularly at airports. Although WS has conducted assessments of wildlife hazards at several civilian airports, more systematic and thorough evaluations must be completed at all civilian and military airports in South Dakota.

South Dakota Wildlife Services Funding

Wildlife Services operates a cooperatively funded program. In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, the program also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they have an interest in wildlife damage management.

